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AUTHOR Stone, Frank Andrews
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ABSTRACT

This paper presents phenomenology as an alternative approach in conducting educational research. The aim of phenomenological research is the exploration of the fundamental consciousness of the person or people being studied so that their perceptions can be identified and interpreted. Today's phenomenology comes from the work of a group of European philosophers. The fathers of the movement are two Germans, Franz Brentano and Edmund Husserl. Other contributors to phenomenology are also discussed in the paper. Phenomenology is then contrasted with normative conceptual, analytic, and empirical research methodologies. The conventional methodology of interpreting the thought of some educational theorist or pedagogical movement by analyzing, categorizing, comparing, and contrasting concepts is based on a paradigmatic framework. According to this model, human beings react and respond to the world outside of themselves on the basis of identifiable shared mental structures. Phenomenological paradigms are based on a different rationale and function differently than do normative ones. Phenomenologists assert that every human being has a unique life of consciousness. The paper then describes the processes involved in doing phenomenological investigations. Two requirements are rigorous detachment on the part of the researcher and a focus on the pure consciousness of the informant not on observable behavior or recognizable conceptual modes. Methods for focusing on this pure consciousness are described. The article concludes with brief descriptions of four recent studies in which phenomenological methodology was used. (RM)

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PHILOSOPHICAL PHENOMENOLOGY:

A METHODOLOGY FOR HOLISTIC EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Frank Andrews Stone

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ABSTRACT

"Philosophical Phenomenology: A Methodology for Holistic Educational Research" presents an alternative approach to preparing educational studies. Phenomenology is explicated and then contrasted with normative conceptual, analytic and empirical research methodologies. A brief historical sketch of the origins and development of phenomenological thought is provided. There is then an exposition of the processes involved in doing phenomenological investigations. The article concludes with brief descriptions of four recent studies in which phenomenological methodology was used.

PHILOSOPHICAL PHENOMENOLOGY:
A METHODOLOGY FOR HOLISTIC EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Methods derived from modern philosophical phenomenology have been applied to investigating problems in aesthetics, ethics, the theory of values, psychology and religion. They have also been used to study issues in epistemology, hermeneutics and logic. Intellectual history is often written phenomenologically. For these reasons, phenomenological approaches are promising as means of studying educational concerns that parallel these domains where the methodology is already well known.

The problem, however, is to identify clear and consistent processes for doing phenomenological investigations in the field of educational studies. No brief exposition can replace having familiarity with the primary documents concerning philosophical phenomenology, but this article is an attempt to describe a rationale for applying phenomenology to educational research. Some typical designs that demonstrate this type of investigation will also be presented.

The Phenomenological Mode

Phenomenology is a movement toward recognizing human awareness, consciousness and perceptions within the realm of one's own lived experience as the core of a person's reality. By focussing on these grounds from which cognition and behavior stem, phenomenologists try to avoid abstract, ideological and theoretical interpretations of their data. Some of the expositions that phenomenologists

criticize are done by researchers who use traditional normative tools in their work. They are often working to organize their information by applying some general system of categories that are believed to be widespread or even universal. Ultimately, the rationale for dealing with data this way is derived from idealism. Much of what contemporary analytic philosophers do, however, is also regarded as being abstract logical and semantic generalizations from a phenomenological perspective.

Equally, philosophical phenomenology is also a critique of studies that purport to be empirical where quantification has been used in order to produce some broad generalizations that are based on statistical interpretations of data. Whether the findings have been derived from formal precepts or are based on the observable behavior of human beings, phenomenologists argue that idealistic and empirical investigations can't fully probe the lived experience of the subject being studied. The aim of phenomenological research, therefore, is the exploration of the fundamental consciousness of the person or people being studied so that their perceptions can be identified and interpreted.

It is the assertion that all human "being" and each person's essence is to be found in their conscious awareness, the <u>phenomenon</u>, that characterizes philosophical phenomenology. There are many differences of articulation and application among phenomenologists, but they will all agree that reality for each individual is formed by internalizing his or her direct sense perceptions. Our English word phenomenon can be traced back to a Greek term meaning "to appear" or "to show." Modern phenomenologists believe that the "given" of any situation or process is the way that it has been perceived by those who are involved in it. They therefore claim that scientific explorations of human reality must always include studies of personal consciousness and intentionality.

There are intimations of this position in the works of earlier German philosophers. Immanuel Kant in The Critique of Pure Reason, for instance, distinguished between phenomena, or the appearance of reality in one's own consciousness, and noumena, which Kant regarded as the metaphysical, conceptual existences of reality as being. Kant realized that only phenomena can be known, because the noumenal realm is always an abstraction. G.W.F. Hegel also contented that philosophy had to be solely concerned with phenomena. Hegel, however, applied a dialectical process in order to construct his heirarchy of consciousness. Its categories move from the most basic form, immediate sense perceptions, to the all-encompassing general consciousness that Hegel called the Absolute Spirit. From Hegel, the dialectical determinism of Karl Marx with its grand motifs of economic determinism, class struggle, the avantegarde and alienation is several steps away. Contemporary phenomenologists abjure the transcendental aspects of all of these earlier explorations of phenomena. They respect them, however, as pioneering efforts to recognize the fundamental nature of human consciousness.

Today's phenomenology comes from the work of a group of European philosophers. The fathers of the movement are undoubtedly two Germans: Franz Brentano (1838-1917) and Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Other theorists who have had an important impact on phenomenological thought are Germans such as Martin Heidegger, Max Scheler, Karl Jaspers and Hans-Georg Gadamer. French philosophers such as Maurice Merlau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, Gabriel Marcel and Paul Ricoeur have also contributed to phenomenology. Phenomenological themes are identified in the works of Martin Buber and Miguel de Unamuno by many scholars. Although phenomenology has not displaced analytic philosophy from its dominant place in Great Britain and the United States, there are many philosophical phenomenologists here too. Herbert

Spiegelberg, a refugee European philosopher who is now professor emeritus at Washington University, was a pioneer in bringing phenomenology to the attention of Americans. Other prominent phenomenologists in our society are James Edie of Northwestern University, Quentin Lauer of Fordham, Jitendranath N. Mohanty at the New School for Social Research in New York, Maurice Natanson of the University of California at Santa Cruz, and Richard M. Zaner of the University of Texas.

Phenomenology is also prominent in the thought of some intellectuals outside of philosophy. John MacQuarrie, a Scottish theologian, for instance, applies phenomenological methodologies to process theology. Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, the former Archbishop of Krakow, Poland who became Pope John Paul II, wrote a phenomenological study. Social phenomenology is used by the Scottish psychoanalyst Ronald D. Laing in his existential psychiatry. Rollo May, an American psychoanalyst, provides an extensive phenomenological discussion of intentionality in his book, Love and Will. The influence of phenomenology can also be observed in other psychological approaches such as Gestalt Therapy and the type of non-directive counseling advocated by Carl Rogers which are alternatives to American neo-Behaviorism that stems from Positivism and British Utilitarian thought. Phenomenology also informs the approach of some cultural anthropologists such as James P. Spradley[1], who apply its methodologies when doing ethnographic field studies.

Contrasting Normative with Phenomenological Paradigms

The conventional methodology of interpreting the thought of some educational theorist or pedagogical movement by analyzing, categorizing, comparing and contrasting concepts is based on a paradigmatic framework. According to this

model, human beings react and respond to the world outside of themselves on the basis of more less identifiable shared mental structures. These ideas are normative in the sense of being characteristically observable in that particular social milieu. People living in Paris, it is assumed, think by using the conceptual structure of French and the repertoire of thoughts that their urban setting produces. The members of nomadic tribes in Saudi Arabia will similarly share characteristic patterns of thought and speech that come from Arabic, Islam and their way of life. The predictable commonalities of each community, it is asserted, are sufficiently typical to be used as a reference point when forming an apparatus for classifying and interpreting thought.

If we shift away from this traditional way of doing normative conceptual explication in order to perform logical and semantic analyses of the same material, the procedures that we use are still based on applying standard paradigms. The claim that all meaning is a function of the phonology, syntax, morphology and underlying logic of ordinary language is an example of this. Investigators who apply this methodology believe that all human thought has been conditioned by the language dynamics that formed it. Language is formal and observable so it can be studied in order to assess the cogency, consistency and logic of a particular thinker. Note, however, that the criteria being applied are again abstract, normative ones. They have not been grounded directly in the subject's consciousness. What is formal and predictable in the utterances of the subject will be identified, rather than unique and original aspects.

Phenomenological paradigms are based on a different rationale and function differently than do these normative ones. Phenomenologists assert that every human being has a unique life of consciousness. While aspects of it derive from one's culture and society, yet the dynamics of each person's consciousness are

original with them. Personal consciousness, therefore, cannot be adequately understood just by matching the points where it converges with abstract generalizations and the conventional structures of expression.

On the contrary, phenomenologists argue, no act of consciousness can ever be properly separated from the disposition and volition of the person who has it. As a part of their on-going life experience, any particular act is neither isolated nor arbitrary. Rather, we can anticipate that it will exhibit a high degree of internal consistency and integrity because any person's acts involve their intentionality. When we have described and interpreted the subject's intentionality, probed the realms of their lived experience, and explored the boundaries of their awareness that form their horizon the advocates of phenomenology assert that we can then comprehend the meaning of their mental and behavioral acts. By developing an inventory of the individual's personal consciousness, these dimensions will have been related to that individual's unique perspective on the world.

This is the basic task of philosophical phenomenology according to Edmund Hesserl. As one writer asserts:

> Philosophy is a rigorous science for Husserl in the sense that it is an investigation of the most radical, fundamental, primitive, original evidence of conscious experience; it goes beneath the constructions of science and common sense towards their foundations in experience. It studies what all particular sciences take for granted and what we in 'natural' everyday experience take for granted. [2]

Designing Phenomenological Research

The first requirement for undertaking a phenomenological investigation is that the researcher refrain from "living in." In other words, during the project rigorous detachment, disengagement and ideological neutrality must be maintained.

Of course, this is not to deny that researchers, like everyone else, have postures or positions of their own regarding the world. In order to describe the consciousness of the informant who is being studied, however, the investigator must adopt what Husserl termed epochè. This is the process of bracketing or suspending for the time being one's own orientation in order to be aware of and responsive to all that the informant conveys.

Next, the researcher must focus on the pure consciousness of the informant; not on his or her observable behavior or recognizable conceptual modes. This intensive search for and exposition of the informant's levels of consciousness Husserl called reduction. This is the process of going beyond, behind and underneath of the conventional structures and patterns of action and thought in order to locate their grounds.

From the position of epochè and in order to undertake reduction a phenomenological researcher explores the constitution of the informant's complex and integral life world (lebens welt). Each human being's life world functions along various dimensions in different strata. The most fundamental stratum is the person's world of private experience (eigenwelt) that each person possesses as his or her inner realm. Much of this private experience, admittedly, cannot be communicated, or is only imperfectly communicable. This stratum, however, must be explored as much as possible.

Related to this inner world of private experience and growing from it are four other strata or domains of consciousness within one's personal life world that are more readily accessible. The first of these is the impersonal or pre-personal public "taken-for-granted" world. The investigation of this realm requires focusing attention on what may have been assumed. It is the study of

what we normally have as our premises and accept as the "given" in situations. Through phenomenological reduction we can become aware of this level of our consciousness that usually remains submerged. It is often necessary to probe the inferences and implications of what the informant says in order to discover their consciousness in this realm.

The next domain of the conscious life world consists of our socially structured worlds of inter-subjectivity. These are the realms of language, expression and all other forms of communication. Phenomenologically, the aim isn't to learn how these operate in the dynamics of society, but rather to recognize their function in the informant's own personal consciousness. Another important stratum is the world of interpersonal experience (mitwelt). This is the realm of conscious personal interaction within various social groups, historical periods and dominant patterns of culture. Again, however, when the investigation is conducted according to phenomenological methodology the purpose is not to study group dynamics or engage in a transactional analysis, although these may be worthy endeavors. Rather, phenomenologists try to understand the person's own consciousness of their interpersonal experiences.

Finally, there is the domain of the world of life experiencing the world (welter fahrendes leben). What is truly distinctive about human beings is that they are only only conscious of themselves and of the world in which they live, but at the same time are also aware of themselves being actors in and interpreters of the world. As Martin Buber pointed out, they reflect on their own thoughts and acts. They carry on internal dialogues between, for instance, their consciousness of being and their awareness of doing.[3] This domain of

personal consciousness is another stratum that can be explored by applying phenomenological methodology. These are the five domains that comprise each person's conscious life world as their realms of awareness.

Investigations of the personal life worlds that are phenomenologically oriented are usually of three types. They are most likely to utilize in-depth semi-structured interviews with the informant in order to produce taped oral histories. These extensive conversations are then transcribed as typed manuscripts and verified by the subject. From them an exposition describing the person's consciousness can be developed. The precise topography of that individual's consciousness, however, is derived from the evidence that has been collected rather than by applying some extraneous normative conceptual or logical framework to it. The exposition becomes the basis for interpreting and analyzing the life world of the subject, grounded in that person's own perceptions, so that findings and conclusions are produced.

The second type of phenomenological research which is often done in conjunction with the first, is projective investigation that may be in the form of a documentary study. The art works or writing of the subject are reviewed in order to identify clues to his or her conscious worlds. The aim may be to explore the intentionality of the informant or study the boundaries of their horizons. Projective evidence can directly become the basis of interpretation, or may be used in the oral history interviews.

Participant/observer case studies are the third approach to doing phenomenological investigations that have much in common with ethnographies. In this case it is important to remember that the investigator isn't primarily concerned

with merely recording the subject's observable behavior. The main aim is rather to recognize clues that may uncover the conscious grounds of that person's thoughts and actions. This way of doing phenomenology also almost inevitably leads back to some type of in-depth interviewing or making queries when the informant describes his or her perceptions.

Phenomenological Dialectics

As soon as we begin investigating the processes of human consciousness that comprise a person's life world, the human activity of "claiming" will be quickly encountered. By "claiming" we mean making supposals that such and such is the case. The premises of our thinking are "claims." Placing ourselves in relations where we acknowledge some involvement is a form of "claiming." It is by these processes of "claiming" it that some event comes to belong to us and incidents in general history become part of our own historicity. These claims of ours underlie our assumptions, assertions, affirmations, beliefs, contentions, commitments and premises. Our claims constitute the grounds of our particular disposition, attitude and outlook. These are not just factual, scientific claims; but exist in the axiological, aesthetic, epistemic, metaphysical and pedagogical domains as well. All of any human being's claiming activities invite phenomenological explication and critique.

According to phenomenology, human beings find themselves inserted into a world where they think, feel, talk and act. By so doing, people transform and reconstruct their world even before they fully know it or can express to themselves or to others exactly what it is that they are doing. Intentionality is

the primary form of this human consciousness. By intentionality we mean all of a person's processes for designing and planning what come to constitute their aims and purposes as human beings in the world. Intentionality underlies our deliberate acts, forms our logical structures and shapes the connotations that we make regarding our experiences. When it is directed outward, intentionality is called volition: our acts of conscious willing, choosing and deciding. One of the main objectives of phenomenological research is to make as much of the interplay between the subject's intentionality and volition manifest as possible.

The way that a phenomenologist is likely to study the fundamental conscious processes of claiming and intentionality is to explore their two faces, viewed from several perspectives. They can be examined from the point of view of the person's inner consciousness contrasted with his or her perception of the situation in which they were or are involved. Similarly, the outlook of the informants, themselves, can be compared with those of other people who participated in the events. It then becomes clear that every domain of human consciousness exhibits a dialectic of inner and outer directed dynamics. Claiming as historical awareness and the consciousness of historicity, or intentionality and volition are not fundamentally different processes but two tendencies within the same life world.

Similarly, the correlativity of the person as a subject (noesis) and an object (noema) in the world has to be recognized on each level of consciousness such as perception, imagination, categorizing and valuing. Therefore, a dialectic is formed in which noetic description is juxtaposed with noemic. In other words, the person's life world is studied by focussing on the interplay among

aspects of inter- and outer-directed consciousness.

An example of how this dialogue or dialectic or consciousness works can be given by citing, for instance, emic descriptions based on the informant's own perceptions, motivations and interpreted actions contrasted with etic evidence derived from other people's perceptions of the same conditions and relationships. An emic and etic dialectic can even be based on the consciousness of the same subject on other occasions or under different circumstances. It is these emic and etic views of their phenomenological processes that can create a type of dialogue that enlightens and clarifies the subject's consciousness.

There are other pairs of modalities within human consciousness that can be identified and studied. One of these is the doxic and sentic mode. The doxic aspect of this polarity concerns all of one's positive claims regarding reality. The sentic mode encompasses our liking or disliking the "facts" that we have claimed through doxis. Another contrasting set of activities in our consciousness are the ontic and ontological. Our ontic perceptions deal with the nature of our own being or essence. The ontological comprise our view of human nature in general or human existence. These two fundamental perceptions are in a dialogical relationship, each affecting the other as together they shape our personal identity and world view. Still another example of these paradoxical aspects in human consciousness is the difference between an individual's awareness of structural time and historical duration. Structural time consists of our conventionally assumed categories and periods. Our sense of historical duration, however, is our personal awareness of eras and moments in our own personal historicity

Other perceptual dialectics can doubtless be recognized within the con-

sciousness of any individual. These examples, however, demonstrate how these dialogic processes in human consciousness function both reflectively and reflexively.

A MODEL OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL DIALECTICS

Refective	Reflexive
Inner Claims	Outer Claims
Intentionality	Volition
Noetic	Noemic
Emic	Etic
Doxic	Sentic
Ontic	Ontological
Historical Duration	Structured Time

A methodology and rationale for undertaking phenomenological investigations of educational concerns has now been described. The goal of all phenomenological research is always to engage in the "science of essences." By this we mean that phenomenological studies are designed to identify and interpret the qualities of human consciousness that give the person being studied his or her unique identity and outlook. By using a phenomenological approach the investigator is trying to become more aware of the relatively stable life world of the individual, as distinguished from that person's existence. For this reason, philosophical phenomenology can be distinguished from existence philosophies where the focus is on having and experiencing being. Phenomenology, rather, is concerned with one's consciousness - the grounds of our thoughts and actions. It is aimed at exposing the foundational elements of one's essence.

Four Examples of Phenomenological Research

A study of "Open Education in the Middle Years: An Analysis of the Thought of Roy Illsley, Charity James, Eugene Ruth and Donald Wells" was done by John Arnold.[4] The investigator examined the perspectives of his four subjects about pre- and early adolescent development, curriculum, teaching/learning methodologies and school organization. This data was obtained from their writings, speeches and in lengthy oral history interviews. It was analyzed and interpreted in terms of their internal consistency and logic, their implicit values, characteristic semantics and the convergence or divergence of their beliefs. This was actually a cross-cultural study because two of the subjects are British and two are American Open Educators.

A somewhat similar methodology produced Christopher Stevenson's investigation of outcomes in open education by soliciting feedback from former students about their personal experience with the Fayerweather Street School, an ongoing informal institution located in Cambridge, Massachusetts.[5] The perceptions of thirteen graduates of this school were studied by the medium of oral history interviews. These young people had been away from Fayerweather for several years and were attending secondary schools or colleges. The interviews were interpreted and analyzed by identifying the phenomena that are the referents of discourse as well as by demonstrating depth reflections upon these phenomena in their constituent parts. The synthesizing processes of these informants were explored, always seeking to recognize their increasingly personal dimensions and levels of meaning.

Ernesto Perez conducted a research project entitled "Educational Labor Organizations in Puerto Rico since 1974: A Comparison of the Perspectives of

Mainland and Puerto Rican Educational Leaders."[6] After using documentary evidence to review the development of educational labor organizations in Puerto Rico, this researcher identified four educational labor leaders in the mainland parent organizations who are English language dominant and four Spanish dominant educational labor leaders in the Puerto Rican affiliates. These people are the informants in extensive oral history interviews that were interpreted in order to explore the extent of convergence and divergence in the perceptions, horizons, intentionality and aspirations of these leaders.

Kay Doost's investigation of "The Child as a Thinker"[7] is a case study of one child's thought and structures of meaning as they reflect intentionality. It is based on extensive documentation of "Neil" including observations, descriptive records and a collection of this child's work from 1971 to 1978 (ages six to twelve.) The research was designed to find out whether there is continuity and coherence manifested in the media, motifs and themes of a child's work. Doost defined intentionality as that thought that is enduringly and persistently manifested in an individual's work and actions. The aim of her study was to elucidate patterns of continuity, divergence and transformation that characterize these seven years of "Neil's" life in school.

All of these researchers have used methodologies based on philosophical phenomenology, often combined with other approaches. Their investigations illustrate the relevance of phenomenology to educational studies. Some means of internal validation was used by each of these investigators in order to increase the credibility of their interpretations. For example, documentary evidence may have been verified by data from an oral history that was subsequently reviewed by the informant or validated by another qualified observer. Thus, other ways of doing educational research are being complemented by phenomenological studies.

NOTES

[1] James P. Spradley, The Ethnographic Interview. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979.

[2] James M. Edie, (ed.) What is Phenomenology? Four Basic Essays by Pierre Thevenaz. Chicago: Quadrangle, 1962, p. 18.

[3] Martin Buber, Between Man and Man. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966, pp. 21 f.

[4] John Arnold, "Open Education in the Middle Years (Ages 10-15): An Analysis of the Thought of Roy Illsley, Charity James, Eugene Ruth and Donald Wells." Ph.D. Dissertation, Storrs, Ct.: The University of Connecticut, 1979.

[5] Samuel Christopher Stevenson, "A Phenomenological Study of Perceptions about Open Education among Graduates of Fayerweather Street School, Cambridge, MA." Ph.D. Dissertation, Storrs, Ct.: The University of Connecticut, 1979.

[6] Ernesto Perez, "Educational Labor Organizations in Puerto Rico since 1974: A Comparison of the Perspectives of Mainland and Puerto Rican Educational Leaders." Ph.D. Dissertation, Storrs, Ct.: The University of Connecticut, 1979.

[7] Kay Doost, "The Child as a Thinker: One Child's Thought as It Reflects Intentionality." Ph.D. Dissertation, Storrs, Ct.: The University of Connecticut, 1979.

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